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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/08/2019

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MEGA-PARTY DELAYS DECISIONS ABOUT ITS  
FUTURE, FOCUSES ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

11. (SBU) On June 3 PolOff met with Mr. Osita Okechukwu, National Publicity Secretary of the Conference of Nigeria Political Parties. Okechukwu said the parties within the "Mega Summit Movement" (until now known as the opposition "mega-party") have not yet decided whether they will form a new political party, or if they will adopt the platform of an existing party. He opined that some political parties will likely remain independent, but will support the mega-party's presidential candidate instead of putting forth their own candidate. However, Okechukwu said the Mega Summit Movement has put off such decisions for now in order to focus on electoral reform. He emphasized that "first and foremost, a level playing field is needed" in order to provide the opposition a fair opportunity in 2011.

12. (C) Comment: The opposition's lack of any concrete steps in organizing as a political party furthers our belief that the "mega-party" is unlikely to pose any significant challenge the ruling party in the 2011 elections. End Comment.

14. (SBU) Okechukwu said it is unfortunate that President Yar'Adua seems to view challenges to the current electoral process as a personal issue, as it is not his current presidency that the opposition is challenging; they hope, rather, to raise the standard for future elections. Therefore, he said the Mega Summit Movement has formed an alliance with civil society organizations, labor, and other progressive democrats to present a draft Electoral Amendment Bill to the National Assembly. The movement's May 29 press statement outlines the reforms it believes are necessary to achieve free and fair elections: 1) appointment of key officials must be removed from the president; 2) funding for the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) should be a "first-charge" on the consolidated revenue fund; 3) all electoral disputes should conclude before declaring a winner; and 4) the legal burden to show that the election was not mismanaged should be on INEC.

13. (C) Comment: We welcome the movement's efforts to encourage electoral reform, though we question the chances of yet another private member's bill getting very far in a National Assembly that has only managed to pass a handful of

bills in the past two years (the budget twice, a supplementary budget and a bill to raise their own salaries).  
End Comment.

14. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
SANDERS